

NEWS & COMMENT FROM OUR MEMBERS

PAA-AFRICA

Daniel Ford, Durham, New Hampshire

That was a welcome article on PAA-Africa in your Fall 1991 *Journal*. When I was researching *Flying Tigers: Claire Chennault and the American Volunteer Group*, I kept finding mention of Pan Am planes and ferry crews on the "east-around" route from the U.S. to China, and I was glad to learn how the route actually worked.

One of your photos showed Curtiss P-40Es bound for Burma. These were Lend-Lease replacements for the *Tomahawk* IIB (equivalent to P-40C) fighters originally supplied to the AVG. Chennault had to send pilots from his combat squadrons to pick up most of them—15,000 miles round trip—but at least two were flown across Africa, India, and Burma by Pan Am civilians. They spent the night of April 7/8, 1942, at the AVG advance base at Loiwing, China. Next morning, they were strafed by Nakajima AG-43 Hayabusas of the Japanese army's 64th Sentai, based in Thailand. One "Kitty" was destroyed, but the other flew on to Kunming, to have its guns harmonized at 300 yards, its USAAF stars replaced by the 12-pointed Chinese version, and its jaw decorated with the famous AVG shark mouth.

BOEING TWIN

Jon Proctor, Bethel, Connecticut

I want to thank you for including more civil aviation subjects recently; especially welcome to commercial airline buffs like me.

Kent Mitchell's excellent Fairchild F-27 story speculated that Boeing's busy schedule precluded more than brief consideration for a twin-engine feeder airliner to replace the DC-3. By chance I came across some photographs depicting such a creature, while sorting out an acquisition from the original Empire Air Lines (Boise, Idaho); apparently a pitch was made to sell the Model 417 to them.

According to Peter Bowers' book, *Boeing Aircraft Since 1916*, this was a design from the Wichita Division, for a post-World War II 17-passenger transport (the artist's conception shows 20 seats, however), to be powered by 800-hp Wright 7BA-1 *Cyclone* engines. I have no other information on the project, which obviously was canceled before a prototype could be built.

I'm happy to donate both photographs to the AAHS library, and would be interested



to know if other members might have more insight on the 417. Thank you again for maintaining a high-quality and most informative *Journal*.

BENDIX'S B-25s

Peter Berry, Ayr, Scotland

I can add some history to the interesting article on the North American B-25s flown by the Bendix Corporation (AAHS *Journal*,

Spring 1992, p. 56). According to John Chapman and Geoff Goodall's *Warbirds Worldwide Directory* (a book every Warbird buff should have on his library shelf):

N5548N was a B-25H 43-4106. Following disposal by the Bendix Corp., it was registered to Richard D. Lambert of Plainfield, IL, 1972/78 and noted with the Heritage in Flight Museum, Springfield, IL, circa 1972. From 1981/87 it was registered to the Weary Warriors Squadron (!), Chicago, IL, and in 1987 was noted as under restoration at Rockford, IL, with a 75mm cannon nose.

N3184G. After ownership by Perez Santiago, Miami, FL, in 1970, it was registered to Transaereos Beni, La Paz, Bolivia, as CP-970 in 1972. Noted as crashed on June 7, 1976.

N69346. Registered CF-DKU to Aurora Aviation Ltd, Edmonton, Alberta, in December 1972. Re-registered C-FDKU to G&M Aircraft Ltd., St. Albert, Alberta, 1982/86.

The *Warbirds Directory* is available from Specialty Press Publishers & Wholesalers Inc., 123 North Second Street, Stillwater, MN 55082. Tel: 612-430-2210. Priced around \$25.

BREAKING IN THE B-26

Tom Hall, 1622 Freeman Ave., #202,
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Since submitting my article, "Breaking in the B-26," some new material has come to light which should clarify some subjects that were covered rather vaguely.

In the process of trying to clarify the very complex topic of runaway propellers I actually muddled the issue with a couple of self-contradictions and at least one unprovable assertion. It was dopey of me to say that runaway props have erroneously been equated with engine failures, because they *could* result in engine failures, as I described. What I should have said was, "Erroneously equated with a complete loss of thrust due, in part, to the misleading term 'flat pitch'. . . ." In the lowest possible pitch setting, the Curtiss-made blades had a pitch of 16 degrees, and the Lycoming-made blades had a pitch of 18 degrees. I don't know yet when the Lycoming blades appeared on B-26s. In any case, it's very clear that *in any circumstances* of overspeeding, the lowest pitch setting was ample to allow flight. At least one pilot survived the simultaneous overspeeding of both props on his B-26 and I will ask him to write his story as a letter to this column.

Since there is no record of frequency for runaway props in the first year of B-26 flights, it is impossible for me to prove that the majority of runaways on takeoff were due to human error. However, this belief is shared by more than one B-26 veteran of that period, including Col. Maiersperger, my technical editor. Nevertheless, there were a number of ways the system could malfunction and did. It would be nice to see someone publish an article on the Curtiss electric prop and the problems encountered on the various planes which used that product. I would not be competent to write such an article.

Regarding the loss of 40-1410 and its crew of three in November 1941, I based my speculation that the crew may have tried to escape not only on the survival instinct but also on the fact that a canopy hatch and the nose gear doors (another escape route on the B-26) were ripped off just prior to the crash.

After seeing a video by the Marauder Historical Society, I should mention that those parts may have come off due to suction during a spin and not because anyone opened them.

Regarding the copy about the cover photo, old myths die hard and even AAHS seems unready to relinquish the fiction that the B-26 killed many of its first aircrews. The copy composed for the cover stated: "Called the Widowmaker because of the number of fatal accidents during its teething period, the B-26 *Marauder* vindicated itself later in the hands of trained pilots. . . ." I regret that I did not make my point more forcefully: *The fatal accidents in Florida and Louisiana did not take place during the teething period of the plane.* Accelerated service testing of the first variant B-26 had already concluded at Patterson Field by the time those accidents began, and the bomber's merit had been proven by that time. The first aircrews for the B-26 were among the best trained for it. Indeed, the first B-26 units, the 22nd BG and 18th RS, *did not lose a man* during their service tests of the new bomber even though they were working with an unknown.

THE OHIO-CURTISS AIRPLANE CONNECTION

Hal Andrews, Arlington, Virginia

Dick Morley was nice enough to generously thank me for assistance on his thorough coverage of Curtiss-Columbus operations. However, I obviously didn't understand his full interest with respect to the airplanes themselves and photos thereof. My assistance in this respect was far short of the mark and the following notes and photos are intended to round out this aspect of the story.

One of the problems with many WWII photos is that two versions (sometimes more) of the photo exist. One is the original; the other(s) retouched for public release under wartime censorship procedures. Similar things may be done at any time for PR purposes, and it's certainly better than the mutilation of the original negative that sometimes occurred to meet censorship demands, but. . . . The Curtiss-Columbus photos in this category are under two neg numbers—and sometimes one or the other was also copied by BuAer and given a BuAer photo number (now National Archives 80-G). Unfortunately, the latter is all too often a copy of the retouched photo.

Two of Dick's illustrations are victims of this process: the SO3C-2 (not No. 1) on p. 186 and the SB2C-1C on p. 189. The original SO3C-2 shows the ASB radar antennas under the wings and the BuNo, 4914, painted on the fuselage ahead of the wing for flight line identification. These were touched out in the released photo.

Also included is a photo of an SO3C-3, the final production version, with the updated finish and U.S. insignia and the production sequence number (ship no.), 638, on the engine cowl for line identification.

Not quite the same view, but taken on the same flight is SB2C-1C, BuNo 00297, seen on p. 189. The Yagi antenna under the starboard wing and 20mm cannon barrel protruding on the port show clearly. Apparently the retoucher got overzealous in removing the external control linkage along with the antenna since this wasn't subject to censorship deletion.

Neither Dick's nor George Hernahan's SB2C article in the Winter 1991 *Journal* depicts the SB2C-1 at Columbus (except in the background of the plant dedication photo). It is seen here on the flight ramp outside the east end high bay area of Building 3.

Also shown is the first XSB2C-6 BuNo 18620, after its arrival at Columbus following conversion in the St. Louis plant, along with 18621, from SB2C-3s. The lengthened aft fuselage and original tail surfaces and wingtips can be noted. These were later replaced on 18620 by XB2C-1 type tips and surfaces as part of the DT2C development program.

A couple of comments are appropriate with respect to other captions in the article: PP. 186/187—The SO3C at the plant dedication was the first production SO3C-1, not the XSO3C-1.

PP. 192/193—The two farthest away in the flight view are the original XSC-1s in orange paint; the others are initial production airplanes, most of these designated as XSC-1s for use in the flight development program. P.191 bottom—The left plane is SB2C-4, BuNo 20323, on production flight checkout while the right one is SB2C-3, BuNo 19315, which was used for flight testing various flight control fixes, particularly to improve directional stability—note the flight test instrumentation boom mounted under the port wingtip.

P.193—The folded *Seahawk* (upper view) is XSC-1 No. 2, BuNo 34096, mounted on its Edo main float at Columbus with tip floats installed, for ground checkout purposes—no seaplane flying was done there (or near there).

P.194—One of the two XB2C-2s, shown in the "B" configuration with swept-back leading edge outer panels and duplex flaps. P.195—The XB2C-1 at the top is No. 3, BuNo 50881; the lower one is BuNo 50879, the first XB2C-1 as rolled out and prior to flight. Note the engine cooling fan. For a different perspective, XB2C-1 No. 4 BuNo 50882 is seen here being needed for a structural demonstration test flight carrying eight 5" HVAR rockets. Booms mounted under the wingtips carrying an angle of attack vane on the port side and a yaw vane starboard.

P.196—The No. 2XF-15C-1 was completed at Buffalo in the low tail configuration and

modified to T-tail after initial flight tests there and at Patuxent River.

1. An unretouched photo of the SO3C-2 *Seamew* shows the ASB radar antennas under the wing. The retouched version appeared on p.186 (Fall 1991 *Journal*).
(Curtiss-Wright via H. Andrews)

2. SO3C-3, the final production version, with production sequence no. (ship no.) 638 on the engine cowl for line identification.

(Curtiss-Wright via H. Andrews)

3. Unretouched view of the SB2C-1C seen on p. 189 shows Yagi antenna and 20mm cannon barrel.

(Curtiss-Wright via H. Andrews)

4. The XSB2C-1 *Helldiver*, BuNo 1758, at Columbus. First flight was 18 December 1 940 and was destroyed a few days later.

(Curtiss-Wright via H. Andrews)

5. XSB2C6-1, BuNo 18620, at Columbus following conversion at St. Louis plant.

(Curtiss-Wright via H. Andrews)

6. XBT2C-1 ship no. 4, BuNo 50882, rigged for HVAR rocket structural flight demonstration.

(Curtiss-Wright via H. Andrews)



1.



2.



3.



4.



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